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SUBJECT: EUROPEAN BRIEF OCPAS-EUR 89-081 FOR 08 APRIL 1989.

FROM: DDI/O/CPAS.

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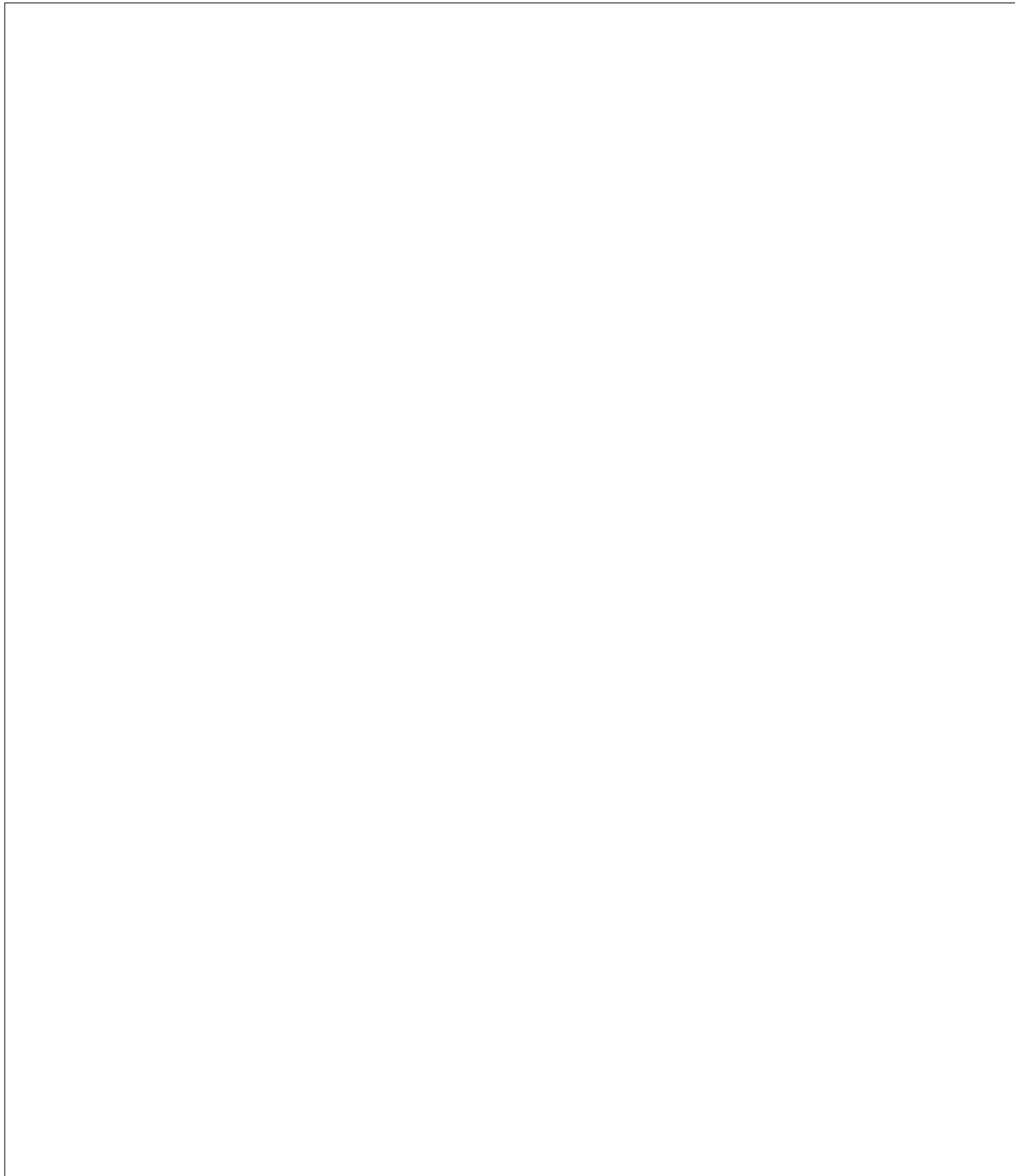
3. USSR: ETHNIC CONFLICT ERUPTS IN GEORGIAN REPUBLIC

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APPROVED FOR RELEASE ☐ DATE:
29-Mar-2010

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3. USSR: ETHNIC CONFLICT ERUPTS IN GEORGIAN REPUBLIC

ACCORDING TO PRESS REPORTS, TROOPS AND ARMORED PERSONNEL
CARRIERS WERE DEPLOYED IN TBILISI YESTERDAY TO CONTROL A CROWD OF

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[REDACTED]

MORE THAN 100,000 PROTESTERS, MANY REPORTEDLY CALLING FOR GEORGIAN INDEPENDENCE. THE PROTESTS HAD APPARENTLY STARTED ON TUESDAY IN REACTION TO DEMANDS LAST MONTH BY ABKHAZIAN FOR THE SECESSION OF THEIR AUTONOMOUS REPUBLIC (ASSR) FROM GEORGIA AND TO AN INCIDENT IN WHICH ABKHAZIAN FIRED ON GEORGIANS AT A RALLY AT LESELIDZE. THE GEORGIAN SUPREME SOVIET ON 31 MARCH REJECTED THE ABKHAZIAN PETITION FOR DIRECT RULE OF THE ASSR BY MOSCOW LIKE THAT WORKED OUT FOR NAGORNO-KARABAKH. SOVIET MEDIA REPORTED THAT THE ABKHAZIAN PARTY CHIEF, WHO WAS RECENTLY ELECTED TO THE NEW CONGRESS OF PEOPLE'S DEPUTIES, WAS DISMISSED BY GEORGIAN PARTY LEADERS ON THURSDAY. [REDACTED]

COMMENT: GEORGIAN NATIONALISTS HAVE BEEN EMBOLDENED BY THE ASSERTIVENESS OF THE OTHER NATIONALITIES IN THE CAUCASUS. CALLS FOR GEORGIAN INDEPENDENCE PROBABLY BEGAN WITH A SMALL GROUP OF RADICALS BUT MAY SPREAD IF PROTESTERS GAIN CONFIDENCE. THE REPUBLIC GOVERNMENT IS LIKELY TO BEGIN ARRESTING PROTESTERS IN AN ATTEMPT TO RESTORE CALM, EVEN THOUGH A SHOW OF FORCE MAY SPARK CLASHES AS IT DID IN ARMENIA AND AZERBAIJAN LAST WINTER. THE ABKHAZIAN'S ACTIONS ARE CONFIRMING THE FEARS OF SOME SOVIET LEADERS THAT THE NAGORNO-KARABAKH PRECEDENT WILL ENCOURAGE OTHER MINORITIES TO DEMAND GREATER AUTONOMY. [REDACTED]

USSR

ABKHAZIAN ASSR . . . POPULATION 486,082 . . . 85,285 ABKHAZIAN, WHO ARE MUSLIMS, MAKE UP 17 PERCENT OF ABKHAZIAN ASSR POPULATION, .01 PERCENT OF GEORGIAN REPUBLIC'S POPULATION . . . IN 1978 ABKHAZIAN PROTESTED AGAINST PROPOSED CHANGES IN REPUBLIC'S LANGUAGE POLICIES, SUCCESSFULLY RETAINED ABKHAZIAN AS ASSR'S LANGUAGE. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

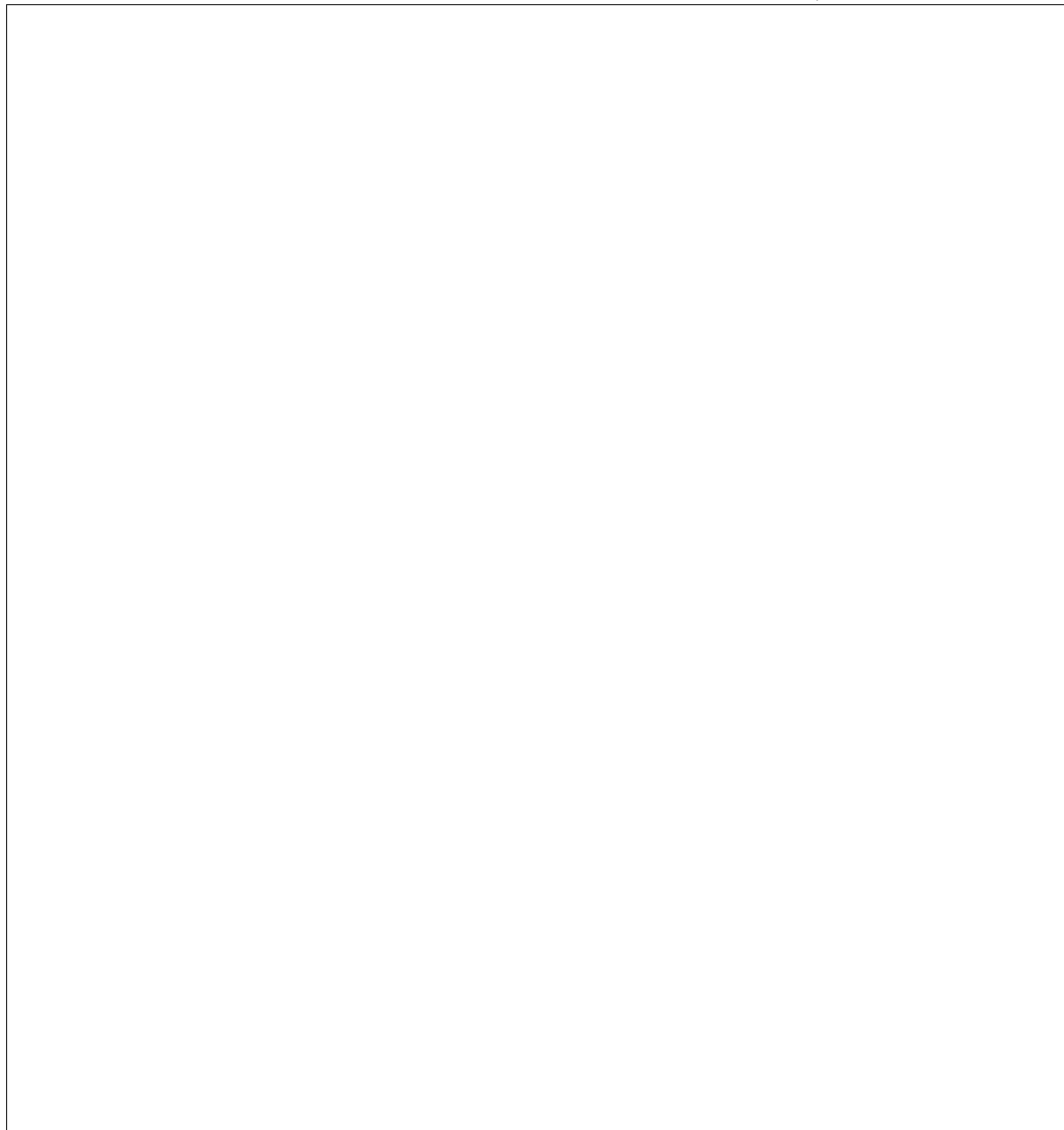
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